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ABSTRACT

The evaluation of Utah State University's distance education course in French as a second language consists of two separate reports, one of the instructional materials used and the other based on a later site visit. Evaluation of instructional materials focuses on a commercially available textbook and related student workbook and audio tapes, an enhanced syllabus, lecture-based audiotapes, and computer programs. Methods included review of the materials, analysis of project records and reports, and a telephone survey of eight students registered in the class. Evaluation methodology is detailed in an introductory section. Results of the evaluation are then summarized separately for each of the evaluation components. It is concluded that overall, the course provides effective, well-organized instruction. Specific recommendations for improvement are offered. A list of references, the telephone survey instrument, and names of students involved in the evaluation are appended. The site visit report consists of results of face-to-face interviews with program coordinators and students and observations of participating students at two sites. Results indicate significant differences between the sites in retention and student involvement, possibly due in part to communication problems. Recommendations for improvement are made. The two interview instruments used are appended. Contains three references. (MSE)

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ED 375 661

EVALUATION REPORT 1
The Distance Education French Project

Materials Evaluation

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October 6, 1993

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Evaluation Report 1:

The Distance Education French Project

Materials Evaluation

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Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract	1
Introduction	2
Methodology	3
Formative Evaluation	4
Research Questions	4
Evaluation Methods	5
Evaluation Results	6
I. Enhanced Syllabus	7
II. Textbook: Deux Mondes : A Communicative Approach Textbook	12
III. Workbook, Deux Mondes - Cahier d'Exercises, and Commercial Audio Tapes	19
IV. Lecture Tapes Narrated by Dr. Savoie	24
V. Computer Program	30
VI. Telephone Survey	34
Overall Conclusions of the Evaluation	41
References	43
Appendix A: Telephone Survey Instrument	44
Appendix B: Names of Students Involved in the Evaluation (by Team)	46

Abstract

Utah State University is developing a Distance Education French Project which aims at providing access to quality language instruction in rural school districts. This project is funded by Utah State University, US West, and the Utah Public Education Foundation. Project course materials consist of commercially available materials including the textbook, Deux Mondes, the Deux Mondes - Cahier d'Exercises workbook, and commercial language audio tapes. Integral to the teaching are materials developed by Dr. Norman Savoie at Utah State University consisting of an enhanced syllabus, lecture-based audio tapes, and computer programs.

The project proposal mandates an evaluation be completed to evaluate and compare the levels of language acquisition through intensive review of student performance and course materials. In meeting that goal, an evaluation team headed by Dr. J. Nicholls Eastmond from Utah State University conducted a preliminary evaluation of the course materials. Because the project was just in the early stages of implementation, evaluation of student learning and involvement through observation was not possible during the course of this evaluation. A more thorough evaluation of these aspects will be completed beginning in January 1994. However, evaluation of individual course materials combined with discussions with Dr. Savoie and telephone interviews of previously and currently enrolled distance education French students provides insight to existing strengths and weaknesses of the materials and the distance education French course.

This report discusses the evaluation findings. Overall, the evaluation results indicate that the course provides effective, well organized instruction for French language distance education. Specific recommendations for improvements are provided.

Introduction

The Distance Education French Project (DEFP) began in August, 1993, under joint contract with U.S. West, Utah State University, and the Utah Public Education Foundation. Currently in its first year, the project is funded for three years (1993-1996). Its purpose is to provide French language coursework for students in remote rural Utah high schools by way of distance education. Project course materials consist of the textbook, Deux Mondes, the Deux Mondes - Cahier d'Exercises workbook, and commercial language audio tapes, as well as an enhanced syllabus, lecture-based audio tapes, and computer programs developed at Utah State University by Dr. Norman Savoie.

The project takes a unique approach to the challenge of providing French language instruction to students in remote rural Utah high schools who would otherwise be unable to take a foreign language course. The program is based upon the premise that students in rural high schools can learn French in a concurrent enrollment situation through university-based distance education. Targeted for high schools in Kane, Millard, San Juan, and Sevier counties, the project includes high school students in the eleventh and twelfth grades in a concurrent enrollment program, giving both high school and university credit for French 101, 102, and 103.

As mandated by the project proposal, an evaluation has been completed to evaluate and compare the levels of language acquisition through extensive review of course materials. In meeting that goal, an evaluation team headed by Dr. J. Nicholls Eastmond from Utah State University conducted an evaluation of the course materials. The team was composed of 18 graduate students enrolled in Instructional Technology 679, "Instructional Product

Evaluation," during the four week summer session from July 19 to August 20, 1993. Due to constraints such as accessibility to distance learning students, situational characteristics of distance learning including self paced scheduling and proximity of students to USU, and time, evaluation of student learning and involvement through observation was not possible during the course of this evaluation. A more thorough evaluation of these aspects will be completed beginning in January 1994.

The intent of this report is to examine factors that might explain the workings and degree of success of the DEFP. This report is the result of an extensive evaluation study of this project, first through an examination of project documents and discussions with Dr. Savoie. Careful study of student materials provided by the project, followed telephone interviews with 8 of the 12 students who have completed or are currently registered for the class provide insights to potential program effectiveness. The report is meant to provide a qualitative perspective of the project by examining the course materials. An attempt has been made to be candid in observations, and, in all cases, to be fair in an assessment of factors, motives, and constraints operating on the project.

Methodology

This study makes use of the qualitative research techniques exemplified by ethnography, including structured and unstructured interviews with persons both inside and outside of the project staff, and an analysis of project materials, records, and reports.

Formative Evaluation

In this formative evaluation, the primary question is "What can be done to improve the product's effectiveness in teaching the French language to distance education students?" The formative evaluation is intended to assess the effectiveness of the course materials (the textbook, Deux Mondes, the Deux Mondes - Cahier d'Exercises workbook, commercial language audio tapes, enhanced syllabus, lecture-based audio tapes, and computer programs) in supporting French language distance learning. As such, it will provide feedback on the DEFP project and serve as the basis for future product revisions.

In reality, DEFP instruction is already being offered through the university's extension program. To date, 12 college students have enrolled and three have completed the LFR 101 course. This fall, the first group of students from rural school districts will be concurrently enrolled in the course.

In light of this schedule, this evaluation effort should be considered an implementation formative evaluation consisting of a tryout of the prototype product with users.

Research Questions

The overall research questions for the evaluation are drawn from the Evaluation Design document (Eastmond, 1993) as follows:

1. To what extent is the French program offered under the Distance Education French Program effective in developing the language skills -- speaking, listening, reading, and writing -- normally obtained in the French 101-103 college sequence?

2. In what ways can the current materials and program be made more effective in reaching rural high school learners?

In completing this specific examination of the DEFP course and instructional materials, the teams focused on three central research questions.

- What role does each component of the materials play in delivering instruction?
- To what extent do the course materials achieve their instructional objectives as identified within the project's objectives?
- What can be done to improve the course materials?

Evaluation Methods

For this evaluation, students in a graduate level Instructional Technology course, Instructional Product Evaluation, were divided into teams composed of 2-4 members. Team members included International students, full-time Instructional Technology graduate students, and teachers completing graduate coursework in Instructional Design and Library Media during the summer quarter. Each team was assigned to evaluate one component of the course materials (the textbook, Deux Monde, the Deux Mondes - Cahier d'Exercises workbook, commercial language audio tapes, enhanced syllabus, lecture-based audio tapes, and computer programs). Additionally, a telephone survey of students who have finished the course or are currently enrolled provided responses to specific questions on the course and its instructional materials. Finally, discussions with Dr. Savoie provided background, insights, and concerns for evaluation.

In evaluating course materials, each team was assigned one component of the course to assess. Team members perused the materials independently and brought their conclusions to the group for consensus. Meetings with the entire class where the component was demonstrated or related to other components that had been evaluated by individual teams provided more feedback on individual components. Additionally, some team members asked for opinions of people outside the evaluation such as high school or college students, professors teaching languages at other universities, and DEFP project members. Each team's evaluation results are compiled here.

The telephone survey included questions on students' likes and dislikes for the class as a whole and each component of the course materials separately (see Appendix A). Eight of the 12 students registered for the class were reached by phone. Two of those eight had completed the course. Attempts to reach the other four students were unsuccessful. Overall, this telephone survey provides a preliminary index of user satisfaction of the DEFP course.

Finally, discussions with Dr. Savoie directed some of the evaluation agenda. His concerns, especially involving the quality of the audio lecture tapes and the slow progress of enrolled students, were addressed during individual component evaluations and the telephone survey.

Evaluation Results

Since each component of the course materials was evaluated individually by a team, those results are presented separately. Then, the telephone survey is discussed. Finally, overall conclusions are drawn.

I. Enhanced Syllabus

The enhanced syllabus serves as a link between the student, teacher, and course materials. It contains an introduction to the course, lessons that direct the students to particular audio lecture tapes for instruction and further directions, and assignments and quizzes to be returned to the instructor for grading.

The team members involved in evaluating the syllabus included one International and two American students. In completing the evaluation, the team reviewing the enhanced syllabus focused on the following questions:

- What role do the materials play in delivering instruction?
- To what extent, does the syllabus achieve its instruction objectives as identified within the project's objectives?
- How does the syllabus meet the standards of instructional design as prescribed by Gagné's Nine Events of Instruction?

Methods Used for Evaluation

The team relied upon several methods to complete the enhanced syllabus' evaluation.

- Document review. The team assessed the enhanced syllabus to determine what elements of instruction design were present. This would be considered a connoisseur based study using instructional design expertise.
- Learner's reactions. The team reviewed the learner interview data obtained from the students who have completed the course or who are currently enrolled. In this case, the team assessed the syllabus' appeal. This would be considered a decision

oriented study.

- Learner's performance. In completing this portion of the study, the team examined the student's performance, reviewing the records of the three students who had completed the course against those who were enrolled in the traditional French 101. This would be considered an objectives based study.

Evaluation Results

In completing the document review, the team evaluated the syllabus' design to determine what elements of instruction as prescribed by Gagné were present. The results of the evaluation are listed in the table.

Instructional Event	Pro	Con
Gain Attention	• Humor • Conversational writing style	• Humor & writing style could be used throughout the syllabus. Not just the introduction. • Page layout. Visual elements should be accentuated to draw attention to the individual assignments.
Provide Objectives		• Assignment objectives not listed in the syllabus.

Provide Advance Organizers	• Audio tapes serve as an advance organizer.	• Assignments in the syllabus don't contain an advance organizer. • Every instructional product should contain multiple - entry points for the learner. The only entry point into the syllabus is through the tapes.
Recall Previous Learning	• Audio tapes and text serve this function without redundancy.	
Present Information	• Other resources better serve this function.	
Provide Learning Guidance	• Outstanding resource as combined with the tapes.	
Provide Practice	• Outstanding resource as combined with the tapes. It also provides practice quizzes and tests to prepare the student for the real thing.	
Provide Feedback	• Excellent. Immediately upon completion of an assignment, in most cases, the student receives immediate feedback on his or her performance by comparing answers.	
Summary	• Provides vocabulary lists, etc.	• Does not always list key points for each assignment.
Test	• Provides practice tests and quizzes.	

In evaluating the learner's reactions, the team relied upon the results of a guided interview with two students who had completed the extension course. These interviews were

not focused solely on the syllabus but on the course as a whole. Only two questions were focused specifically upon the syllabus or instructional products. The team reviewed the interview results and compared their response against Flagg's (1990) evaluation criteria for user friendliness and reception. The results appear in the table.

User Friendliness	Comments	Inference
Accessibility	Overall, I thought the syllabus was great. It was very thorough and with the tapes, let me know what I had to do.	The tapes are the only entry point into the course. Even with a limited sample, one student (as described by Dr. Savoie) stated that he couldn't complete the written assignments in the syllabus without the tape.
Responsiveness	Very thorough in its descriptions. Very explicit when the assignments should be turned in.	The feedback and guidance built into the syllabus were effective although one student felt the syllabus didn't cover enough of the course. The team was unsure what she meant by that statement.
Flexibility	Dr. Savoie referenced a conversation with one of the students who had completed the course. He received a passing grade but would have done better if he had listened to the tapes. He was unable to complete the assignments.	The syllabus without the tapes offers no flexibility to the learner.

Reception	Comments	Inference
Appeal	I thought the syllabus was great.	Page layout was very clean. Clip art added some variety to the document. Humor and the introduction's conversational writing style were effective.
Participation	Very thorough in its descriptions and directions.	The syllabus provided abundant opportunities to engage the student with questions, fill in the blanks, practice, quizzes, and tests.

In evaluating the learner's performance, the team was unable to gain direct access to the records of the three students who had completed the extension course. In its place, they obtained copies of records from the USU extension office and spoke with Dr. Savoie. By his account, the grades were comparable with those of his traditional French 101 class. Two of the three students received above average grades (an A) while the third received an average grade (a C).

Recommendations for the Enhanced Syllabus

Revise the syllabus to contain objectives and advance organizers. These will act as additional entry points for the student and provide greater access to the assignments. For example, a book has a table of contents and an index to access information. Also, each chapter of a textbook might begin with an overview of the chapter and a list of important concepts or new terminology. The same principles could easily be applied to the syllabus.

The current course design mandates that the student rely solely on the audio tapes. These students are operating at a distance. To better support these students, the course should contain multiple entry points to gain access to the instructional material.

Summary

The syllabus serves as a link between the student, teacher, and course material. It does not integrate all of the resources but functions as an entry orienting tool. The student locates the lesson he or she needs to work on and then accesses the audio tape to receive assignments for that section. Without the audio tapes, the syllabus is cryptic, if not incomprehensible.

As an integrated resource, the syllabus is effective in supporting the student's learning and acting as an administrative tool. It provides opportunities for practice and feedback. In addition, it acts as a central reference point for the student. The last section of the syllabus contains the submission forms that accompany each homework, quiz, or test for the course.

In evaluating the document's instructional design, the syllabus is a powerful resource in providing opportunities for practice and feedback. It meets most of Gagné's prescriptive recommendations for instructional design. Recommendations are cited in the previous section.

II. Textbook: <u>Deux Mondes : A Communicative Approach Textbook</u>

The team members included two International students and one American student. Two of the team members had some high school French.

Deux Mondes is a "Natural Approach" text, utilizing the "Second-Language Acquisition Theory" developed by Dr. Stephen D. Krashen of the University of Southern California, and designed to be utilized in courses in which instructor and students interact in ways designed to develop students' ability to communicate ideas and thoughts in both spoken and written language. Five hypotheses around which the Second-Language Acquisition Theory is formulated are:

1. The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis. This hypothesis states there are two kinds of knowledge needed in developing the ability to communicate in a second language: acquired knowledge and learned knowledge. Learned knowledge, according to Krashen, is knowledge *about* language and how it functions. Acquired knowledge, on the other hand, is unconsciously obtained and refers to the ability to automatically understand and produce sentences. Acquired knowledge is the basis for what is often referred to as the "feel" for how to say things or why we understand what was said.

2. The Monitor Hypothesis. The Monitor Hypothesis suggests that those target language skills which are acquired in communication are basic to a linguistic proficiency. Acquired language is also the primary source of a student's ability to create and understand utterances. Learned knowledge, on the other hand, acts as a "monitor" in editing or making minor corrections before the sentence is produced.

3. The Input Hypothesis. The purpose of the Input Hypothesis is to describe those conditions under which acquisition will occur. According to this hypothesis, acquisition occurs when the acquirer understands utterances in the context of that communication which contains the grammatical forms, structures, and vocabulary to be acquired. Acquisition

occurs when acquirers focus on that meaning being expressed during communication.

4. The Natural Order Hypothesis. This hypothesis states that grammatical forms tend to be acquired in an invariant and predictable order, i.e., students learning English acquire the progressive form, *is speaking*, before the present tense, *speaks*. The Natural Order Hypothesis also implies the order of acquisition may be different from the order of learning. At the present time research has not been able to determine the overall "natural" acquisition order for all grammar rules of any language.

5. The Affective Filter Hypothesis. The Affective Filter Hypothesis states that only in those situations which are "affectively" positive will acquisition take place. Essentially, this means that those students who are poorly motivated, or have low self-images, will have difficulty with language acquisition.

Six guiding principles of the Natural Approach incorporated into the textbook are:

1. Comprehension precedes production.
2. Speech emerges in stages.
3. Speech emergence (stage 3) is characterized by grammatical errors.
4. Group work encourages speech.
5. Students acquire language only in a low-anxiety environment.
6. The goal of the natural approach is proficiency in communication skills.

Deux Mondes is a well-known college-level text being used in the French 101, 102, and 103 classes at Utah State University, and in university classes in the United States and abroad. It was not intended for use in high schools.

Methods Used for Evaluation

The textbook, Deux Mondes, was evaluated using several methods.

- Document review. The team members individually examined the textbook and evaluated it before meeting together and sharing their observations. Additionally, an eleventh grade female high school student looked over the textbook and responded with oral and written comments to the team. The French language background of this student was one year of French in Jr. High School and one year of French in High School. This student is very interested in learning French.

- Learners' reactions. The results of the telephone survey questions involving the textbook were reviewed.

Evaluation Results and Recommendations for the Textbook

The text appears to be well organized with each chapter of the student text containing three definite sections: **Activités orales** (oral activities) followed by the **Vocabulaire** (chapter vocabulary), **Lectures supplémentaires** (additional readings), and the **Grammaire et exercices** (explanations of word usage and grammar with exercises). The main focus of the course is on the oral activities and consists of a variety of activities and readings. Each chapter vocabulary includes a list of all new vocabulary words introduced in the oral activities. The supplementary readings are intended to provide an opportunity for more written input. The grammar and exercises section includes word usage and grammar explanations followed by some short exercises for each.

The pages with Written Exercises are color coded with brown borders, which make

them easier to find; however, one student indicated it would help if they used more than one color for their color coding. Color coding the edges of each chapter in different colors would be of value.

There is an introductory section at the beginning of the book designed as a review for those students who have already had some French instruction. For beginning French students, such as those for whom the DEFP is intended, it is designed to teach those fundamentals of French which would be covered in French 101.

The text in general appears to be interesting to students. It covers many of the day-to-day needs of someone needing to communicate in French. There are many small drawings related to the sentences and vocabulary which help increase students' comprehension of new material. One student comment was that it was "much better" than the high school text she had previously used.

There is a good French-English dictionary at the back of the book which would appear to be helpful. Students have noted it would be helpful to also have an English-French dictionary as they "would have great difficulty looking up the word in French if (they) only knew its English equivalent." An English-French dictionary may need to be added to the materials provided with the course.

The font used in printing the book is a little smaller than that often found in high school texts. Students have indicated it would help if a larger font size had been used and they also would like to have the illustrative pictures in the text enlarged.

Deux Mondes has some very good colored pictures at the beginning, however the rest of the book only uses black and white illustrations. Students have indicated more colored

pictures would be helpful. One eleventh grade student stated that colored pictures throughout the text would catch the eye of the student and make it more interesting. It was also suggested that a more interesting colored picture on the cover of the book would catch the students' interest and make them more desirous of learning French. The book is designed to be used with an instructor-created picture file which would make up, at least in part, for the lack of colored pictures in the textbook. The second edition of Deux Mondes, not scheduled for use with this course, appears to have handled these problems.

In general, the text appeared satisfactory for the purpose of using it in a distance education setting with high school students. It was compared with the text used to teach French in Korean high schools and found to be superior. In Korea, the textbook French, created and published by the Korean Department of Education, is used for teaching high school French. The book has no pictures as compared with many illustrations in Deux Mondes. French is a thinner book, published on thinner and poorer quality paper than Deux Mondes, and is not as interesting to the students. French is in black and white, rather than including some color as is seen in Deux Mondes.

Information obtained through the telephone survey of eight (8) students using Deux Mondes in their French correspondence course yielded the following:

To the question, "What did you like BEST about the TEXTBOOK (Deux Mondes)," they reported, (1) "vocabulary at the end of the chapter," (2) "pictures," (3) "easy to follow and understand," and (4) "good comprehension aid."

To the question, "What did you like LEAST about the TEXTBOOK," they reported , (1) "lack of structure," (2) "confusing," (3) "poorly organized," (4) "dictionary does not

define enough words," and (5) "not enough practice exercises."

The seemingly conflicting findings and observations by the different evaluators may perhaps be explained by the difficulty (and perhaps motivation for learning French via correspondence) the correspondence school students were experiencing in their studies. Due to the many factors operating in this situation, it would probably be appropriate to conduct another study of the correspondence school students and include such things as their motivation for taking the course, outside (environmental and personal) factors affecting their studies, length of time they have been using the textbook, grades they have received in the course to date, any special difficulties they have been having with the course, etc.

The Instructor's Edition of Deux Mondes includes an "Instructor's Manual" at the back of the book and also marginal glosses (instructor's notes) in the margins throughout the book. It provides information concerning the theories and hypotheses subscribed to in the text and includes much of value to the instructor, including a section entitled "Scope and Sequence" noting themes/topic and grammar developed in each chapter and Answers to Grammar Exercises (Appendix C).

Summary

The textbook is an excellent resource and a critical component of the DEFP course. Changes to the text as a result of this evaluation's recommendations would have to be completed by the text publisher. Realizing that a second edition of the text is now available, but that for the time being, the project has chosen to use the first edition, the enhanced syllabus could incorporate an increased dictionary and additional practice exercises.

III. Workbook, Deux Mondes - Cahier d'Exercises, and Commercial Audio Tapes

The team members conducting the evaluation of the workbook and commercial audio tapes consisted of two International students and two American students. All group members had personal experience in learning at least one foreign language, and two members had a working knowledge of the French language. The group evaluated the Deux Mondes workbook and the accompanying audio cassettes for the Distance Education French Language Course equivalent to French 101, 102 and 103 as taught at Utah State University. These findings of the evaluators are based on the evaluation of only two components of the total program, and these findings must be interpreted within the context of the complete program.

Methods Used for Evaluation

Members of the group worked through étapes 1 through 4 and chapters 1, 2, 3 and 5 in situations closely resembling the target application. During a forty-five minute interview, instructors of the French language at Brigham Young University were given a description of the program. They examined the workbook and provided opinions on its content and format as well as the projected effectiveness of the total program.

The methods used to report evaluation results include:

- Self Report. To evaluate the user friendliness, the appeal and the effectiveness of the materials, three members of the evaluation team worked through étapes 1-4 and chapters 1, 2, 3 and 5 in situations closely resembling the target situation, i. e. by themselves, using an audio cassette player with headphones, the workbook and pencil and paper. Two of these evaluators have a working knowledge of French, while the third member of this team had no

previous exposure to the language. The evaluators reported their findings and attitudes to the group.

- Expert Interview. To obtain feedback on the content, materials design and effectiveness of the materials, one member of the evaluation team described the planned applications of the materials to two instructors of the French language at Brigham Young University and asked them to examine the workbook. The instructors each spent roughly fifteen minutes examining the format and content of the workbook and approximately thirty minutes reporting their findings and answering the evaluator's questions as listed below:

  - what are the strengths of this workbook?

  - what are its weaknesses?

  - how does it compare to similar materials you have used or examined in the past?

  - how does it compare to the materials you are currently using in your instructional program?

  - in your opinion, will the completion of the workbook as part of the total program help to prepare the students for placement in the 200 level of French?

- Learners' Reactions. The results of the telephone survey were reviewed.

Evaluation Results

1. Strengths of the materials:

   a. The tapes and the text were congruent in all elements, enabling the user to follow along precisely and consistently.

   b. The pace and content of the tapes and the workbook were challenging without

being overwhelming.

c. The writing activities were judged to be useful and appropriate.

2. Weaknesses of the materials:

a. The sound quality of the commercial audio cassettes was somewhat irritating. The evaluators had to increase the volume to understand the spoken words, but then background noise and tape hiss became audible. The evaluators listened to two different tapes and found the same phenomenon on both. Although these tapes were copies, the problem probably exists in the originals.

b. The material on the tapes was sometimes spoken too quickly to be readily understood.

c. The word search exercises in the workbook were judged to be of little or no merit to the overall program.

3. Value of the materials:

Supplemented by the textbook, the guidance tapes from the instructor and support from the on-site monitors, this combination of workbook and audio cassettes is effective and contributes greatly to the goal of the course.

These findings are supported by the results of a concurrent evaluation of the same program. An evaluator contacted students currently enrolled in the program and asked their opinions about components and aspects of the course. These students judged the audio cassettes practical, well-paced, congruent to the written text and entertaining. They

appreciated the opportunity to listen to native speakers of the language. The students found the workbook easy to follow. Their one concern was that the dialog on the tapes was sometimes too fast to follow, especially while working on the exercises in the workbook.

The team members also considered the user friendliness, appeal, and effectiveness of the workbook and commercial tapes in the evaluation.

1. User Friendliness:

The evaluators were confident that the target audience, i.e. juniors and seniors in high school, would be familiar with the formats of audio cassette and workbook. The combination of materials is a standard and proven approach to teaching, and the evaluators do not foresee any obstacles that would adversely affect the user friendliness of this approach.

2. Appeal:

The voices on the audio cassettes were easily identifiable as young adults and adults. Conversations are held at home, in the classroom, the park and similar situations to which the target users can easily relate. The sometimes too-young or too-repetitive tone of the conversations is acceptable because of the limitations imposed by the lack of command of language.

The slight technical problem with the quality of the audio cassettes can hopefully be remedied, and the segments spoken too rapidly for complete comprehension are compensated for by the word-for-word text. Neither was judged to be significantly detrimental to the

appeal of the project.

The layout and illustration of the workbook were found to be neither innovative nor easily dated or potentially offensive.

Given that the target audience of this project will most likely consist of highly motivated young adults, neither the format nor the media design presents any obstacles to acceptance by the user.

3. Effectiveness:

The components evaluated in this section provide somewhat limited opportunity to practice speaking and writing French, tasks sometimes considered vital to the holistic approach to learning a foreign language. The audio cassettes and workbook do, however, teach vocabulary, orthography and some grammar, and they acquaint the students with the basic rules for pronunciation and expose them to the sound of the language.

The consulting experts, while unfamiliar with the goals and objectives of French 101-103 as taught at Utah State University, expressed some doubt that students who had finished this course would be adequately prepared for the demands of French 201. Dr. Norm Savoie, the instructor responsible for subject matter content of this project, assured the evaluators that students who finish the course will be as capable as those who experienced the on-campus equivalent.

Since it is still possible to remedy or compensate for the few weaknesses cited above, the evaluators could not discern anything that would prevent the target audience from learning French to the full extent of the goal of this project.

Recommendations for the Workbook and Commercial Audio Tapes

The audio cassettes examined during this evaluation were locally produced copies of the original, commercially produced cassettes. It is recommended that the project managers experiment with ways to produce copies of better quality or purchase sufficient quantities of the commercially produced tapes to avoid unnecessarily annoying the target audience.

The word searches should be eliminated from the assignment list in favor of short, written assignments, providing more opportunity to practice grammar, orthography, and using vocabulary in context.

Summary

The Deux Mondes workbook and the accompanying audio cassettes for the Distance Education French Language Course equivalent to French 101, 102 and 103 were judged to be challenging, yet appropriate materials for a beginning student of the French language who has received prior guidance in the applications of the materials and provided these applications are supported by the textbook, the tapes produced by the actual instructor and the on-site monitors of the program.

IV. Lecture Tapes Narrated by Dr. Savoie

This formative evaluation was conducted by a team of three American graduate students. It examined the classroom instruction audio cassette tapes for the DEFP, which were narrated by Dr. Norman Savoie.

The results of this study show that in spite of some minor adjustments that could be

made, the tapes were effective in teaching the subject matter, maintained user friendliness, and were appealing to the users. It was the team's recommendation, therefore, that the tapes be rerecorded to improve sound quality, but that most of the content be left intact. By removing too much of the current content, the tapes would lose their appeal to most students.

The team evaluated the tapes to answer three different questions:

- Are the tapes appealing?
- Are the tapes user friendly?
- Do the tapes teach?

The sections below explain these three questions, describes the methods used in the evaluation, the limitations the evaluators faced, the results of the evaluation, and provides recommendations.

Methods Used for Evaluation

The evaluation was conducted using results of a telephone interview of eight students enrolled in the course and test results of the three students who had finished the course, quiz scores of all students enrolled, observations of subjects using the tapes, and evaluators' impressions from listening to and examining the tapes.

In considering appeal, user friendliness, and effectiveness of the tapes, the team identified a mixture of variables to examine. These variables included likableness, interest, personal relevance, familiarity, credibility, and acceptability. User friendliness was defined as a program that anticipates students' needs and responds to their wishes. When evaluating

whether the tapes taught, the team based criteria on the goals the program planned to achieve.

Evaluation Results

The results of the evaluation were overall very favorable and are summarized below.

Appeal

Three of the eight students who have taken the course felt the tapes were the part they liked best. All of the students who listened to the tapes found them likable. A ninth grade student stated that the narrator had a very pleasant voice. The humor was definitely appreciated and added to the learning experience. One former student found them very amusing. Another student who just started the course wrote a reply back to Dr. Savoie in French saying she thought he was "weird" but enjoyed the tapes immensely. In addition, the extra noise, such as rattling paper, the squeaking chair, and the Old Main chimes, gave a sense of comfort to the students. This, in turn, facilitated learning and made the students feel comfortable with the teacher. However, interruptions, such as knocks on the door or the telephone ringing should be removed to help the flow of the program. One student said that Dr. Savoie gave very good descriptions and these helped in the learning process.

The above factors also added interest to the tape and made time pass more quickly. One student the team evaluated wanted a workbook right away because of interest in the tapes.

Being able to listen to the tapes at home created less stress than students face in the

classroom and enhanced the learning experience. Because of the noises and the personableness of Dr. Savoie, listeners were able to identify with him, creating personal relevance, an important aspect of learning. In addition, using a tape recorder did not threaten any of the students because they are a common instrument.

Through use of familiar sounds and humor, Dr. Savoie became more real and believable to students. The learner can picture him sitting in his office, being just as tired at the end of a long day as his students, and so he becomes credible and enjoyed more. However, a student complained that there were too many interruptions on the tape; the evaluator determined that the phone and knocking were what presented these interruptions.

The material on the tapes meets the expectations of the students; there is nothing offensive or necessarily surprising; and they are thus judged as acceptable to students. The tapes met the criteria that defined them as appealing.

User Friendliness

Using a tape recorder, as stated previously, is non-threatening, because most users have had the experience of using one before. It is also easy to use and responds easily to user commands. When listening to the tape, Dr. Savoie has anticipated what the user needs to do. When taking a quiz, he tells what papers and supplies the students need to have in front of them. When giving a lesson, he pauses to let the students answer, giving enough time to answer without making students feel rushed.

Students felt that introductions to lessons were well done and helped them understand the units better. They also felt the tapes helped tie the entire program together, giving it a

cohesiveness that would be lacking otherwise. One student who had completed the independent study course felt, however, that some of the lessons went on too long. The student felt that each lesson should only be fifty minutes long, as in a classroom setting. This feature becomes a trade-off: time and comfort versus length. Because audio is "locked in" on the time dimension, the user at present has few options.

When listening to the tapes, one evaluator found that, in comparison to other language study tapes she had listened to, she received timely feedback that was appropriate to her needs. Another student felt at a disadvantage when listening to the tapes because she recognized that she did not have all the materials (workbook, textbook, etc.) necessary to use the tapes properly.

Overall, the team felt the tapes permitted great flexibility in use with regard to time. For example, the tapes could be used whenever and wherever the student wanted, so long as a tape recorder was available. The tapes fit all of the criteria defined for user friendliness.

Effectiveness

When defining whether the tapes teach what they are required to teach, the team's criteria consisted of whether the tapes were successful or not in facilitating outcomes. Some students, when asked if they could learn from the tapes, stated that they could. Other students concurred that the tapes would enhance the learning in French 101.

Based on the results of two tests and two quizzes for the three students who had completed the DEFP course, the team found that the tapes helped facilitate learning for the students taking the course by home study. From the limited test results, it appears that there

is little difference in course test results between the classroom and home study. Again with the limited quiz scores, it appears that classroom and home study scores are parallel. Approximately one-third of the classroom group (n=22) failed Quiz 7 along with one-third of the home study group (n=3). The person who failed the home study quiz did not complete all assignments to this point, claiming they were not included in the materials provided. This may explain the decrease in score from previous scores made by the individual. On another quiz, the classroom group again showed one-third failure, while the home study group all showed passing scores. With the limited number of scores available from home study students, the team concluded that the tapes did facilitate the successful outcome of the home study students.

Recommendations for the Lecture Tapes

Since the tapes appear to teach French in a satisfactory manner and were appealing to the students, it is recommended that the tapes be modified only in recording quality. Interruptions should be removed (i.e., telephone, door knocking), but the narration should continue to be provided by Dr. Savoie because of his natural rapport with students and his sense of humor that was enjoyed by the students and evaluators. Otherwise, the uniqueness of the tapes will be lost and they will become just some more tapes that lack humor, charm, and personality.

Summary

The evaluation conducted with the course lecture tapes concluded that overall, the

tapes were effective and favorable for teaching French. In spite of some individuals feeling they were too long and that there were too many interruptions, the humor and the appeal of the tapes were more than enough to override the objections.

V. Computer Program

Dr. Savoie addressed the class regarding the distance French program. In his interview he indicated that multiple instructional materials were already part of this package. An investigation of those parts, particularly the expanded syllabus, indicated that the software was a supplement to the vocabulary contained in the textbook, Deux Mondes. However, the computer software had not been issued to any enrolled students as part of the course materials, as it was still being developed.

With this limitation in mind, each member of the team (composed of three American students and one International student) reviewed the software individually and then reported the findings to the rest of the team. Some of the criteria used to judge the software were:

- screen design/graphics
- user friendliness
- teaching effectiveness
- student appeal
- documentation

After the initial review of the software by this team, several common questions surfaced.

- Is this software package dependent upon any other courseware materials?

- Is it user friendly? i.e. "Does it bite?"
- Do all participants in this program have access to computers and to the software?
- Since this software is a supplement to the other materials, is it really necessary to student achievement?

This study reveals both strengths and weaknesses found in this software package. Suggestions for improvement are also included.

Methods Used for Evaluation

- Self Report. Each member of the team evaluated the software individually, and this report reflects collective and individual impressions. On the average each group member spent 1 - 1 1/2 hrs. reviewing the package.
- Comparison Evaluation. Team members then compared this package to the Jostens/WICAT software and used the State Evaluation Checklist as a guide to evaluate related support materials, content, and presentation qualities.

The group reviewed seven lessons: The French-speaking countries (geography), the items found in a classroom, how to tell time, the seasons, the members of the family, the parts of the body, and the weather.

The methods of collecting data included individual software review by each group member followed by a group discussion. General reactions to the software from the all teams' members also aided in supporting general impressions. The State Software Evaluation Checklist was also used as a guide to judge items such as support materials, content analysis,

and presentation qualities.

Evaluation Results

This section is in two parts: the strengths and the weaknesses of this program. These results were derived from the software reviews and class discussions.

1. Strengths of the program

- The use of color in the screen design was aesthetically pleasing.
- The screen followed generally accepted design principles such as titling, the text was easy to read, instructions were short and concise, and the graphics in general were not overpowering.
- The use of sound allowed aural interaction. The student was able to hear native French pronunciation.
- The idea of the picture, the word being pronounced, and seeing the actual word is a plus.
- The sequencing of the computer program matches that of the textbook vocabulary lists.
- The table of contents was well organized and was readily accessible for ease of navigation.
- The unit on geography (French speaking countries) gives an insight into where French is a native language and ties the language to geographical locations. (Ex: A student hearing a weather report from Montreal would associate that with the French

language).

- The software is designed to be used as a stand-alone resource.

2. Weaknesses of the program

- There was no documentation (manual) accompanying the computer software, at least in the prototype version. This feature would be helpful for start up, maneuverability within the program and for an understanding the objectives of the software program.
- The icons used should be labeled. In their current form they can be very confusing.
- A few of the graphics are inappropriate. Some examples are:
  - The hand with the middle finger accentuated.
  - The woman's legs are suggestive.
  - The woman's face focused more on the lips than the face.
- There is no explanation for the spelling test.
- There is no apparent tracking of test results.
- In some instances, the English text was overlaid on the graphics. This was not needed.
- No on-line help menu or instructions are available.

Recommendations for the Computer Program

The team's individual and group evaluations have produced the following conclusions:

- All software contained on computer disks should be incorporated on one CD ROM. (There is too much information to load on hard drive. Our understanding is that there are approximately 22-25 disks each containing up to 1.2 Megabytes of program files. This leads to excessive disk swapping in its current form.)

- The introductory documentation should list the hardware and operating system requirements.

- The appropriate hardware or software might not be available in the students' computer labs. (Color, sound projection, CD ROM are needed for software effectiveness).

- A tutorial for using the icons and navigating through the program would be very beneficial. This should be separate from the actual French tutorial.

- A legend screen showing the way the computer program is set up and explaining the use of buttons, icons, etc. would enable the user to navigate through the program properly and would prove to be very helpful.

Summary

This software provides a very useful tool when studying a foreign language because of its multimedia capabilities. When used in conjunction with the other course materials (text, workbook, and audio tapes), this tool provides excellent feedback to the students.

VI. Telephone Survey

Dr. Savoie spoke to the evaluation teams regarding the current course materials, and during the interview, he indicated more than once that his primary concern, and the

information he is most eager to have, are the reactions from the students to the course and materials.

To address these concerns, a telephone survey was conducted in which students who have completed or are currently enrolled in the home study French course were questioned about their reactions to the materials provided for the course. This section of the report relates the results of the telephone survey.

Methods Used for Evaluation

A list of students currently enrolled in the home study French class was secured, and telephone calls were placed to those students. A questionnaire was prepared (Appendix A), and those questions were asked of the students. Note that this report reflects the answers of 8 of the 12 students on the class list. The others were not contacted/available for the following reasons: telephone numbers were not available for two students, one student refused to participate, and one student could not be reached.

The telephone survey is composed of a combination of open- and closed-ended questions (see Appendix A). The questions relating to the French class materials are primarily open-ended. The results, therefore, are both quantitative and qualitative.

Evaluation Results

The following are the questions asked and the answers provided by the students. Instead of indicating the results in percentages, they are indicated by the number of times that response was given out of the number possible. In the case of multiple choice questions,

the choices available are listed along with the students' responses.

1. Did you take this class for college credit or for enrichment?

College credit	2/8
High school credit	1/8
Enrichment	3/8
Both credit and enrichment	2/8

2. What is your academic grade level?

College graduate	4/8
Junior/College	1/8
Sophomore/College	1/8
Senior/HS	1/8
Sophomore/HS	1/8

3. Why did you take this class via home study?

(a) Your ability to manage non-directed study	1
(b) You could not get the class at a convenient time	2
(c) You could not get the class at a convenient place	1
(d) You thought it might be easier than in a classroom setting	
(e) Other (specify)	3

High school did not offer language classes
Likes the independent time frame
Could not get the class at a convenient time
Could not get the class at a convenient time or place
Ability to manage non-directed study
Did not like the classroom teacher

4. Have you taken any other language classes in any form?

Yes	6/8
No	2/8

5. If yes, how did this one compare? (6 possible)

Favorably	5/6
Unfavorably	1/6

6. Have you completed this French class?

Yes	2/8
No	6/8

7. If no, what was you primary reason for not finishing the class? (6 possible)

Still working on it	6/6

8. The course materials included five elements: Text book, Workbook, Textbook tapes, Dr. Savoie's tapes and a Syllabus/Course Outline.

Which of these elements did you like best?

Course Outline	3/8
Dr. Savoie's tapes	3/8
Textbook	1/8
Both tapes	1/8

Which of these elements did you like least?

Workbook	3/8
Textbook	1/8
Dr. Savoie's tapes	3/8
Course Outline	1/8

9. What did you like BEST about the TEXTBOOK?

Vocabulary at the end of the chapter
Pictures
Easy to follow and understand
Good comprehension aid

What did you like LEAST about the TEXTBOOK?

Lack of structure
Confusing
Not organized well
Dictionary does not define all words in the text
Not enough practice exercises

What did you like BEST about the WORKBOOK?

Answers in the back
Easy to follow
Goes well with the tapes
Good comprehension aid
Pictures

What did you like LEAST about the WORKBOOK?

Dialog hard to follow (when working with textbook tapes)
Did not use it - not worth the money
Boring
Hard to use in home study situation

What did you like BEST about the TEXTBOOK TAPES?

Good explanations
Hearing native speakers
Practical
Go at a good pace
Good practice because they require careful listening
Music

What did you like LEAST about the TEXTBOOK TAPES?

Too fast
French friends said the speakers were very bourgeois

What did you like BEST about DR. SAVOIE'S TAPES?

Good descriptions of assignments
Humorous
Ties everything together
Matches text sequence
Good introductions of lessons

What did you like LEAST about DR. SAVOIE'S TAPES?

Too many interruptions (doors slamming, phones ringing)
Too long
No feedback available when confused
Difficult for home study
Too much nonsense
Too much time wasted talking about family
Frustrating because of non-classroom setting
Sometimes not complete enough

What did you like BEST about the SYLLABUS/COURSE OUTLINE?

Very thorough
Makes assignments clear
Good structure
Goes through everything required
Course sticks to outline
Knows exactly when to turn in assignments

What did you like LEAST about the SYLLABUS/COURSE OUTLINE?

Does not cover entire course
Some parts of the course are not explained
Confusing
Not clear about what to do or when to do it

10. Considering that these materials were prepared for a beginning French student, would you rate them:

(a) Very adequate 4/8
(b) Moderately adequate 3/8
(c) Moderately inadequate
(d) Very inadequate 1/8

11. Would you recommend this class?

Yes 7/8
No 1/8

The following correlations were attempted:

- Were any of the responses biased by completion of the class?

  No. The students who completed the class had very similar reactions to those who have not completed the class.

- Were any of the responses biased by the students' academic level?

  No. The responses were similar even though the respondents were a mixture of college graduates, college students, and high school students.

- Were any responses biased by previous foreign language experience?

  No. The responses were similar regardless of the respondents foreign language experience.

Summary

The results of this survey revealed an overwhelmingly positive attitude toward this class and the accompanying materials. This judgment is made is 7 out of 8 students rated the course favorably, rated the materials adequate for a beginning French student, and would recommend it to other students.

The overall impressions of all the materials rated by the students is favorable. Certainly negative impressions were expressed, but none of the reactions would be cause to stop using any of the materials.

These telephone survey findings, although from a small sample of students, play a strong role in the overall evaluation report.

Overall Conclusions of the Evaluation

This evaluation of individual course materials combined with discussions with Dr. Savoie and telephone interviews of previously and currently enrolled distance education French students provides insights to existing strengths and weaknesses of the materials and the distance education French course. The evaluation results should be considered favorable to the project at this stage of implementation. Results indicate that course provides effective, well organized instruction for French language distance education. Many specific recommendations for improvements have been mentioned.

Overall, this evaluation finds the course materials consisting of the textbook, Deux Mondes, the Deux Mondes - Cahier d'Exercises workbook, commercial language audio tapes, an enhanced syllabus, lecture-based audio tapes, and computer programs for the distance education French course to be extensive and workable for students. One of the strongest points of the course materials are the lecture tapes narrated by Dr. Savoie. Although these tapes should be edited to remove some distracting features (phone ringing, knocking on door), evaluators and enrolled students overwhelming agreed that Dr. Savoie's humor and personality make these tapes work. The evaluators have heard that plans to edit the tape scripts and remake the tapes with professional narration are imminent. Due to the response to the existing tapes, this course of action should be taken with care to retain the features found appealing thus far.

Although the commercially produced components of the course materials would be difficult to alter, two other improvements in course materials could assist in making them more usable and effective. First, the commercial audio tapes need to improve in listening

quality. The hiss and poor tape quality make the tapes difficult to listen to and understand. Second, the course syllabus, with additions such as a table of contents, lesson outlines or other advance organizers, an index, and additional language dictionary, could provide multiple entry points into the course for the students and increase syllabus value. Other improvements in "polishing" course materials might be easily implemented. However, these two improvements hold the most potential for increasing course effectiveness.

As the saying goes, "the proof is in the pudding." To date, the distance education students' performance mirrors conventional instruction and the results appear impressive. Performance of this instructional package with rural students must be further assessed. If student performance remains consistent, this project will be useful to distant learners and over time - prove to be very effective to secondary schools in the state.

Further evaluation to assess and compare the levels of language acquisition through intensive review of student performance and course materials will be completed beginning in January 1994 as per proposal specifications. By that time, a larger number of students should have completed the course, and more effective comparisons of this course with traditional classroom instruction can be made.

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Flagg, B.N. (1990). Formative Evaluation for Educational Technologies. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Terrell, T. D., Convert-Chalmers, C., Bugnion, M., and Sarner, M. (1988). Deux Mondes: A Communicative Approach--Instructor's Edition (1st Edition). New York: Random House.

Appendix A

Telephone Survey Instrument

APPENDIX A - QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Did you take this class for college credit or for enrichment?

2. At which academic grade level are you?

   (a) Jr./High School
   (b) Sr./high School
   (c) Fresh/College
   (d) Soph/College
   (e) Jr./College
   (f) Sr./College
   (g) Grad School

3. Why did you take this class via home study?

   (a) Your ability to manage non-directed study
   (b) You could not get the class at a convenient time
   (c) You could not get the class at a convenient place
   (d) You thought it might be easier than in a classroom setting
   (e) Other (specify)

4. Have you taken any other language classes in any form? Yes/No

5. If yes, how did this one compare? Favorably/Unfavorably

6. Did you complete this French class? Yes/No

7. If no, what was your primary reason for not finishing the class?

The course materials included five elements: Textbook, Workbook, Textbook tapes, Dr. Savoie's tapes, and a syllabus/course outline.

8. Which of these elements did you like best? Which did you like least?

9. What did you like best/least about the:

   Textbook
   Workbook
   Textbook tapes
   Dr. Savoie's tapes
   Syllabus/Course outline

10. Considering that these materials were prepared for a beginning French student, would rate them:

    (a) Very adequate
    (b) Moderately Adequate
    (c) Moderately Inadequate
    (d) Very inadequate

11. Would you recommend this class? Yes/No

Appendix B

Names of Students Involved in the Evaluation (by Team)

Names of Students Involved in the Evaluation (by Team)

I. Enhanced Syllabus

John Fox
Susan Krusell
Wen-Shin Yeh

II. Textbook: Deux Mondes : A Communicative Approach Textbook

Shu-Shen Chou
Joo-Yeon Kim
Rose M. Sellick

III. Workbook, Deux Mondes - Cahier d'Exercises, and Commercial Audio Tapes

Fang Erh-Ping
Richard Hawkes
Liu Hsiu-Wen
Daniela E.H. Imai

IV. Lecture Tapes Narrated by Dr. Savoie

Curtis Banks
Michael Huffman
Julie Nelson

V. Computer Program

D.J. Christian
Rae Feng
Kaylene Johnson
John Mace

VI. Telephone Survey

D.J. Christian

EVALUATION REPORT 2
The Distance Education French Project

On-Site Evaluation
July 1994

J. Nicholls Eastmond, Professor
Department of Instructional Technology
and
Michael Barton, Project Coordinator

Utah State UNIVERSITY

EVALUATION REPORT 2

THE DISTANCE EDUCATION FRENCH PROJECT

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Site Visit Team: Michael Weber, Nathan Winchester

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Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract	1
Introduction	2
Methodology	4
Research Questions	4
Evaluation Methods	4
Evaluation Results	5
On-Site Coordinator Interview Questions/Answers	5
Student Interview Questions/Answers	10
Overall Conclusions	13
References	15
Appendix A: On-Site Coordinator Interview Instrument	16
Appendix B: Student Interview Instrument	19

Abstract

Utah State University has developed a Distance Education French Project (DEFP) which is focused on providing rural Utah school districts access to quality foreign language instruction through university-based distance education courses (Eastmond and Elwell, 1993). In the summer of 1993, an evaluation team headed by Dr. Eastmond conducted a preliminary evaluation of the course materials. This year's evaluation picks up where the first one left off.

The distinguishing factor between this evaluation and the one conducted last year is inclusion of face-to-face interviews and on-site observations of students involved with the program. Although the focus of this evaluation included the students' reactions of the program, it was the on-site coordinators who provided another perspective to student learning and involvement, as well as information that was more administrative in nature concerning the overall effectiveness of program operations. Therefore, the overall purpose of the evaluation was to provide additional qualitative perspectives of the factors influencing the implementation of the DEFP.

Two high school sites, Manilla High School and Valley High School (Orderville), where students participated in French classes by concurrent enrollment through university-based distance education, were selected to participate in this evaluation. This report presents the evaluation findings for the first full year's implementation.

Introduction

With funding from U S WEST and the Utah Education Foundation, Utah State University has developed a Distance Education French Project (DEFP) which is focused on providing rural Utah school districts access to quality foreign language instruction (Eastmond and Elwell, 1993). The purpose of DEFP is to provide high school students in rural areas with a concurrent enrollment classes, through university-based distance education, allowing them to participate in French language coursework. A concurrent enrollment program gives both high school and university credit for French 101, 102, and 103. The course materials are available commercially, including the textbook, Deux Mondes, the Deux Mondes - Cahier d'Exercises workbook, and commercial language audio tapes. Other materials integrated into the course were developed by Dr. Norman R. Savoie at Utah State University, including an enhanced syllabus, lecture-based audio tapes, and a microcomputer program that was developed jointly with Utah State University's Learning Resources Program and TARAS Systems, a Utah-based company.

One novel feature of this implementation was the addition of a phonemail system to provide for timely, oral feedback from the instructor. The project paid for use of an "800" number, allowing students at the schools to place calls to Dr. Savoie at any time, and allowing him to respond at another time, to individuals or to the group as a whole.

In the summer of 1993 an evaluation team headed by Dr. Eastmond from Utah State University conducted a preliminary evaluation of the course materials. Their evaluation addressed individual course materials, but included discussions with Dr. Savoie, and telephone interviews with previously and currently enrolled distance education French students. The results of their findings are contained in their report, "Evaluation Report 1 - The Distance Education French Project: Materials Evaluation". At the time an evaluation of student learning and involvement was not possible, leaving the task of a more thorough

evaluation of these aspects of the DEFP Project to be completed at a later date (Eastmond and Elwell, 1993). This year's evaluation picks up where the first one left off.

The distinguishing factor between this evaluation and the one conducted last year is that the intent of this one was to make face-to-face interviews and on-site observations of those who have been involved with the program from the beginning. Such a first-hand approach allowed evaluators to ask questions not only of the students, but also of the on-site coordinator at each of two rural locations. Although the focus of this evaluation included the students' reactions of the program, it was the on-site coordinators who provided another perspective to student learning and involvement, as well as information that was more administrative in nature concerning the overall effectiveness of program operations. Therefore, the overall purpose of the evaluation was to provide additional qualitative perspectives of the factors influencing the implementation of the DEFP.

The original proposal (Wilde, 1993) called for implementation of this program in four to six schools, each with a minimum of five students, for a total of at least thirty high school students. In fact, when the school year began, the project included only two high schools, one with four and the other with three students. Despite low numbers, the project administrators chose to proceed with the experiment.

This report presents the evaluation findings at two high schools where students participated in French classes by concurrent enrollment through university-based distance education.

Methodology

Qualitative research techniques were utilized to gather and analyze the information for this study. At both high school locations, students participated in French classes by concurrent enrollment through university-based distance education. As will be clear from the results, the degree of implementation (and student accomplishment) in the French Distance Education Project varied considerably between the two sites and somewhat among students at each site. Thus, the reader should not assume a uniform exposure to the program on the part of students. In the sections which follow, the two schools are referred to as either School A or School B in order to maintain at least some degree of anonymity.

Research Questions

Two interview instruments were prepared, one for the students and one for the on-site coordinators. Both instruments were administered at each site as a list of primary questions, along with accompanying probe questions to be used at the interviewer's discretion if further detail was needed. The specific interview questions, along with the responses obtained, are presented later in the "Evaluation Results" section of this report. A copy of the interview instrument used for both the on-site coordinators and for the students are provided in Appendices A and B, respectively.

Evaluation Methods

For this phase of the evaluation, a team made up of three students in a graduate level Instructional Technology course (InsT 679-Product Evaluation) was formed. First, the team members familiarized themselves with the course materials, consisting of the text book, Deux Monde, the Deux Mondes - Cahier d'Exercises workbook, lecture-based audio tapes, and computer programs. Then team members reviewed last year's Evaluation Report

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

1, dated October 6, 1993. These materials were found on reserve at the Educational Resources and Technology Center at USU. Additionally, Merry Lu Zeller of the USU Learning Resource Program provided the computer disks, along with overall background and insights to the Distance Education French Project.

Two members of the team were assigned to travel separately to each high school. Appointments for their interviews were made in advance by telephone with the on-site coordinators at each location. The first interview took place at School A on April 21, 1994, and the second at School B on April 29, 1994. In both cases, their stay on-site was for one day, with follow up interviews conducted later by telephone.

Evaluation Results

The results from the on-site coordinators will be discussed first, followed by the results derived from student interviews.

On-site coordinator Interview: The questions for the on-site coordinator interview were as follows:

1) Describe your involvement with the Distance Education French program.
Probes: How did you hear about it?
What was your reason for becoming involved?
How involved have you been with it?

The on-site coordinators at both School A and School B first heard of the Distance Ed French Project through Joan Patterson, Foreign Language Curriculum Specialist, at the Utah State Office of Education (U.S.O.E.). They were notified that the U.S.O.E. wanted a number of schools to pilot test the program.

Both coordinators chose to become involved because of their current administrative positions. At School A the coordinator is the school principal, and at School B the coordinator is the Educational Technology Director for the district.

Although neither of the on-site coordinators actually delivered instruction, the one at School A felt that his involvement was still rather limited in that he mainly just supervised the tests. The other coordinator supervised all Distance Ed activities at the high school, including distribution of materials and setting up a class period.

2) What were your reactions to doing the class in this way?
Probes: What have you seen as the strengths and weaknesses of these components of the program?
a. Commercial (text, audio tapes, workbook)
b. Instructor's (syllabus, audio tapes, computer vocabulary review)
c. Management from USU (pacing of assignments, turning in assignments, feedback, grading, voicemail). Do you know who to call if you need help?
d. School situation locally: (facilities, scheduling, supervision, level of priority)
e. Any other aspects of the program you think are or were important? Anything else needed?

Both on-site coordinators felt that a major weakness of the program was that there was the lack of direct communication or coordination between Dr. Savoie, U.S.O.E, and USU's Independent Study.

School B's coordinator commented that feedback was a little slow. He suggested they consider faxing materials rather than using the standard mail system. He reports having gotten quicker responses through EDNET by faxing information (tests, etc.) back and forth. In addition, he thought that a T1 link-up, or something similar, with students and with Dr. Savoie every week or so would be good. (Unfortunately, access to EDNET is not available to many sites, nor the T1 carrier option, given present funding). School B praised the "1-800" number (phonemail system) as being a good tool.

Another major glitch reported from the viewpoint of School B was that Mind Extension University, the sub-contractor that provided voicemail, cut off the voicemail to the students in January, half-way through their course. (In checking

with project administrators about this situation, it appeared that their access had not been cut off. They had not accessed their messages for a month and a half or so, and when messages piled up beyond available memory space, the company erased them.) The on-site coordinator at School B suggested that U S WEST provide the voicemail themselves, instead of sub-contracting out, since they are supplying the grant for this project and can already provide this service. He says it would be less hassle and less money.

The same coordinator said that computer materials were good, but there was not very much information (i.e. documentation). In addition, the materials were not very compatible with use on a network. He suggested that the materials be on CD-ROM in the future. All in all, he received no less than three sets of twenty diskettes before he finally got a set that worked. Also, he disliked the fact that the manual has no time line, and it has a too many different fonts, making it look inappropriate from a desktop publishing point of view.

An overall comment offered at School B was that high school students probably still need a fair amount of supervision when contrasted with college students and adult learners. He felt strongly that the course needs a time management function built in (i.e. a flow chart) that tells students specific dates identifying where they should be in the course assignments.

Neither coordinator commented on the text, other than to say that it was a little out of date. (Note: the publisher has issued a second edition of Deux Mondes, but the revision process to match up all supplementary materials is seen as formidable).

3) What are the characteristics of the students now in the program?
Probes: Ability level? Maturity as students?

At School A the coordinator characterized the female students as having more of an aptitude towards successful completion of a distance education experience than the males.

Students at School B are juniors and one is a senior. The on-site coordinator characterized them as "B" students and as not the "cream of the crop", but that they are self-motivated and have an interest in French.

4) How many students dropped out of the program?
Probes: Are there some types of students who should be counseled away from this sort of experience?
Are there steps that could have been taken to retain?

All of the students dropped the class early at School A.

At School B none of them had dropped at the time of the evaluation. The district told the students that upon successful completion of the course, they would reimburse half of their $200 enrollment fees. (This feature was at School B only). The on-site coordinator feels that the kids need to be self-starters to do well in class of this nature. He has a lot of kids that are interested only in Future Farmers of America (FFA) and/or shop type classes, and those kinds of students would probably flounder in this type of environment.

5) What is your overall impression of the value of this experience?
Probes: a. Should the program continue another year?
b. What suggestions can you offer to make it work better?
c. Are there any lessons that should be learned?

The coordinator at School A felt disappointed that the program was not more successful. He said that it was not the program's fault, but rather how the

program was put into practice in the school. If given the opportunity to do this again, he said he would provide more on-hands guidance or supervision for the students.

School B's coordinator said the software is good, but that it could stand to be "beefed up". He feels that CD-ROM production is cheap enough these days that it is the way to go. He admits, however, that diskettes are the lowest common denominator. He has 160 computers and 200 kids. In his opinion the program should continue. Most of the kids at his school graduate having completed at least a couple concurrent enrollment classes.

6) Are there any final comments you would like to make at this time?

School A said the tapes were good.

School B recommends that the program decision makers go for multimedia in the future. He is very excited about teaching language (he speaks Cantonese). Also, he concluded that successful language programs are not married to a text, i.e. that various components might be designed to stand alone and not to rely upon a multi-faceted, complicated package of materials.

Student Interview: The questions for the student interview were as follows:

1) Describe your involvement with the Distance Education French program.
Probes: How did you hear about it?
What was your reason for signing up?
How many lessons did you complete?

All of the students at both sites heard about the Distance Ed French class from their respective on-site coordinators. In addition, all but one of the students mentioned that they "have always wanted to learn French". Two of the students at School B mentioned specifically that their reason for taking the class was to improve their chances for admission to a college of their choice.

At School A none of the students who enrolled in the class completed it. One student dropped thirteen days into the class. Another progressed as far as the third test, whereas the remaining students went as far as lesson numbers eleven or twelve.

At School B one student has now only progressed a bit beyond Chapter 1 in the text, while the remaining students have only one test to take before completing the entire course.

2) What were your reactions to doing the class in this way?
Probes: What were the strengths and weaknesses?
Which aspects were most helpful?
a. Commercial (text, audio tapes, workbook)
b. Instructor's (syllabus, audio tapes, computer vocabulary review)
c. Management from USU (pacing of assignments, turning in assignments, feedback, grading, voicemail). Do you know who to call?
d. School situation locally: (facilities, scheduling, supervision, level of priority)

Initially all of the students at both sites were excited about learning a new language this way. At School A, however, they thought originally that a teacher was going to instruct the course.

All of the students at both sites rated the computer program highly.

Four of the students thought that the audio tapes were boring and not very helpful. One thought they were slow and cumbersome to use. The same student thought the tapes didn't explain the material well, and they started off too quickly. The suggestion from this student made was to start more slowly into the content, then move faster through the material as the student gains more experience.

Two of the students at School B praised the voicemail system as being very useful. One student there said that feedback was usually fairly quick. At School A one student mentioned dislike for the voicemail system because it took too much time for feedback.

At School A the students said that the computer they were using didn't have enough memory to store all of the information. Only five lessons could be put on the computer at one time, and the students did not make it past lesson five. Half of the students reported that the objectives were not clear at all. They wanted to know how far along they should be and who and how to contact someone for more information. The other half of the students felt that the objectives were only fairly clear. They said that under the circumstances the program was good.

At School B two of the students mentioned their on-site coordinator as being very supportive of the program. Even though this on-site coordinator knew little about the content of the course, they felt that Dr. Savoie had been helpful. One student liked the outline in the "blue book" from independent study, whereas

another student there thought the "blue book" from independent study was tedious and disliked its format. Another student liked the E-MAIL system.

3) What is your overall impression of the value of this experience?
Probes: a. Should the program continue another year?
b. What suggestions can you offer to make it work better?

All but one student mentioned specifically that they wished there could have been an instructor present because it was hard to learn without face-to-face instruction, practice, and feedback.

At School A half of the students said the overall experience was a good one. They felt they had learned how to speak French. In their opinion the first trimester went well because students had the same schedule and worked together. In the second trimester, however, students had different schedules and lost their motivation to finish the course. They wanted more computer time and a set time to meet for the class, with prior registration. The other half said they would not take this course again; they felt they could not learn without a teacher. They suggest that the course should be offered during a regular class period.

At School B they all liked the course overall, except for the few shortcomings mentioned above. One student here intends to take the 102 series next year (if it is offered).

4) Are there any final comments you would like to make at this time?

Students at School A mentioned having had difficulty with the amount of memory storage available in the computer they were using. They could maintain only five lessons on the computer at one time. Consequently, the students did not progress beyond lesson five.

Overall Conclusions of the Evaluation

The results indicate significant differences between the two sites with respect to retention in student enrollment and involvement. Whereas all of School A's students dropped entirely from the program, not one of School B's students was lost as of the date of the evaluation. Even though both sites recommended improved communication between university-based personnel and the high school, School B's mode of operation still maintained a high level of student retention. Moreover, students at both sites wished they had had more interaction, yet School B apparently still maintained a high level of student retention. This report acknowledges that other variables such as individual student motivation and facilities available must also be considered when trying to pinpoint conclusion as to the disparity between the two high school programs.

The findings indicate, however, that one significant variable influencing the differences between the two sites was the depth of communication and interaction between the on-site coordinator and the students enrolled in the program.

Recognizing that the small enrollments - seven students total- made it difficult to feel that the critical mass needed to sustain a class was there, two recommendations regarding communication are probably in order:

1) Use a management system, flowchart or the like to communicate required dates for completion to students. Use some incentives to encourage regular and orderly progress through the material. But be realistic: for high school students a period of time set aside for study appears essential.

2) Assume responsibility for periodically communicating with learners as a group. Despite the fact that the system is meant to aid students' learning as individuals, there are features of the instructional system that allow for group action. For example, it may be desirable to convene the entire group of learners every month or two for an interactive

session over Ed-Net, using multiple receive sites around the state. Similarly, directives and suggestions given to the entire group via phonemail or e-mail could be effective, if the management system discussed above were in place.

The point of this experiment is to provide a viable means of learning a foreign language to learners in remote locations. Results to date indicate that learners start with high expectations, but may be influenced to follow through or merely coast along depending upon the perceived benefits to be obtained and the progress occurring with others. It seems most significant that the main variability in progress appears to have been dependent upon the various schools, i.e. that students' progress often occurred because, rather than independently. Developers and administrators should keep group factors in mind in designing next year's approach.

References

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Appendix A

On-site Coordinator Interview Instrument

Name: _____
Site: _____
Date: _____

On-Site Coordinator Interview: Distance Education French

Preliminaries: Establish rapport. This interview should take 30 to 40 minutes. Responses will be kept as confidential as possible, given the small number of sites. (We want responses to be frank and to the point!)

1. Describe your involvement with the Distance Education French.
   Probes: How did you hear about it?
   What was your reason for becoming involved?
   How involved have you been with it?

2. What were your reactions to doing the class in this way?
   Probes: What have you seen as the strengths & weaknesses of these components of the program? (Note their suggestions)

   a. Commercial (text, audio tapes, workbook)

   b. Instructor's (syllabus, audiotapes, computer vocabulary review)

   c. Management from USU (pacing of assignments, turning in assignments, feedback, grading, voicemail). Do you know who to call if you need help?

d. School situation locally: (facilities, scheduling, supervision, level of priority)

e. Any other aspects of the program you think are or were important? Anything else needed?

3. What are the characteristics of the students now in the program?
   Probes: Ability level? Maturity as students?

4. How many students dropped out of the program?
   Probes: Are there some types of students who should be counseled away from this sort of experience?
   Are there steps that could have been taken to retain?

3. What is your overall impression of the value of this experience?
   Probe: a. Should the program continue another year?
   b. What suggestions can you offer to make it work better?
   c. Are there any lessons that should be learned?

4. Are there any final comments you would like to make at this time?

Appendix B

Student Interview Instrument

Name: _____
Site: _____
Date: _____

Student Interview: Distance Education French

Preliminaries: Establish rapport. This interview should take 10 to 20 minutes. Responses will be kept confidential and reported only as group information. (There are small numbers, though).

1. Describe your involvement with the Distance Education French.
   Probes: How did you hear about it?
   What was your reason for signing up?
   How many lessons did you complete?

2. What were your reactions to doing the class in this way?
   Probes: What were the strengths & weaknesses?
   Which aspects were most helpful:
   a. Commercial (text, audio tapes, workbook)

   b. Instructor's (syllabus, audiotapes, computer vocabulary review)

   c. Management from USU (pacing of assignments, turning in assignments, feedback, grading, voicemail). Do you know who to call?

   d. School situation locally: (facilities, scheduling, supervision, level of priority)

3. What is your overall impression of the value of this experience?

Probe: a. Should the program continue another year?

b. What suggestions can you offer to make it work better?

4. Are there any final comments you would like to make at this time?